

***Eh*-prefaced questions in Indonesian multiparty conversation: Projecting action and managing participation**

Fakry Hamdani^{1*} and Teguh Khaerudin²

¹*Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, West Java, Indonesia*

²*Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

Research on turn-initial particles in conversational questions remains limited, particularly within Indonesian interaction. Although turn beginnings are widely recognised as crucial sites for projecting action and organising participation, their role in Indonesian question design has not been systematically examined. To address this gap, the present study adopts a conversation-analytic approach to investigate the interactional functions of *eh*-prefacing in Indonesian multiparty conversation. The analysis is based on 9.5 hours of video-recorded multiparty interaction involving 88 participants, including family members, friends, neighbours, tutors, teachers, and students, across a range of naturally occurring everyday settings. Focusing specifically on questions produced under next-speaker selection, the study identifies five recurrent environments in which *eh*-prefacing occurs: topic initiation, self-initiated repair, response pursuit, resumption of prior talk, and access to recipient knowledge. Across these environments, *eh*-prefaced questions function as turn-entry devices that signal the forthcoming action and mobilise recipient attention. In contrast, the interrogative format proper implements actions such as requesting information or confirmation. The findings show that *eh*-prefaced turns are context-sensitive, multifunctional resources that play a central role in organising action, participation, and epistemic relations in Indonesian interaction. More broadly, this study provides a sound basis for cross-linguistic comparison of conversational and linguistic practices by showing how turn-initial particles function as resources for early action projection, thereby refining our understanding of question design and interactional organisation across languages.

Keywords: Action formation; conversation analysis; Indonesian; question design; turn beginnings

Received:

30 March 2026

Revised:

6 September 2026

Accepted:

13 September 2026

Published:

23 September 2026

How to cite (in APA style):

Hamdani, F., & Khaerudin, T. (2026). *Eh*-prefaced questions in Indonesian multiparty conversation: Projecting action and managing participation. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(2), 296-317. <https://doi.org/10.17509/evpm1z74>

INTRODUCTION

Questions are fundamental resources for organising social interaction. Although questions are commonly characterised as grammatical forms used to seek information, research on naturally occurring interaction has demonstrated that they constitute social actions through which participants organise sequences, manage epistemic relations, negotiate access to knowledge, and regulate participation (de Ruiter, 2012; Heritage, 2012; Stivers & Rossano, 2010). A question does more than ask for information. Its wording and delivery display how

the speaker is oriented to the current knowledge state, what sort of response or contribution is expected from the recipient, and what action is being launched at that moment in the interaction. The recipient's answer, delay, or silence then provides evidence of how that action has been understood and helps shape the next development of the sequence (Roseano et al., 2016; Sidnell, 2012; Stokoe et al., 2020).

Within conversation analysis, questions are recognised not simply as grammatical interrogatives but as action formations embedded in the sequential

*Corresponding author
Email: fakry.hamdani@uinsgd.ac.id

architecture of talk. Questions display speakers' assumptions about recipients' knowledge (Kim, 2013), mobilise responses (Stivers & Rossano, 2010), and are designed for specific interactional contingencies. Depending on design and placement, questions may request information, pursue confirmation, invite alignment, or challenge prior talk (de Ruiter, 2012). Thus, question design is inseparable from sequential positioning and from participants' orientations to knowledge and accountability.

One important site of action formation is the beginning of a turn. Turn-initial elements can give recipients early information about how to understand an emerging turn before its propositional content is fully produced (Kim, 2013; Schegloff, 1987b). A growing body of cross-linguistic research demonstrates that turn-initial resources, such as particles, discourse markers, and response tokens, play a decisive role in the formation and projection of social actions (Arita, 2021, 2023, 2024; Bolden, 2006; Hayashi, 2009; Kim, 2013; Mitkovska & Bužarovska, 2025; Pauletto & Ursi, 2022; Benetó, 2023; Tuma et al., 2023; Yang, 2023). These elements can function as stance markers, signal epistemic repositioning, and organise participation frameworks. For example, Japanese *e* and *ano* index noticing, hesitation, and formulation work (Hayashi, 2009), while Korean *kulenikka* reshapes the response space by signalling a shift in epistemic orientation (Kim, 2013). Turn-initial elements matter because they provide early projective cues about how the upcoming action is to be understood, and they operate more at the level of action projection than propositional content.

Indonesian is characterised by extensive particle use, reflecting both its linguistic diversity and its history of language contact. Researchers have widely studied particles in Indonesian, such as the pragmatic functions of *eh* (Rahmanadia, 2022), *kan*, *iya/ya* (Hamdani & Barnes, 2018; Sari, 2008; Wouk, 2001), *deh*, *sih*, *dong*, *kok* (Hamdani, 2025; Mutiara, 2025), and *lho/loh* (Karāj, 2021; Wijaya, 2022). Several of these particles originate from regional languages, for example, *loh* from Javanese and *mah* from Sundanese. For instance, Rahmanadia (2022) explored the pragmatic functions of *eh*, drawing on the Web Corpus of Indonesian blogs. These functions include how Indonesians use the particle *eh* for self-repair, surprise, exclamatory expressions, topic change, and, lastly, irony. Karāj (2021) looks at four common colloquial Indonesian discourse particles such as *sih*, *kok*, *dong*, and *lho* in both spoken conversation and online writing. The study finds that these particles are optional in syntax and do not carry fixed meanings; instead, what they do depends on the context and their position in the utterance. *Sih* is used to convey irony, uncertainty, hesitation, or contrast; *kok* signals surprise, contradiction, or a gap

between expectation and reality; *dong* highlights shared understanding, encouragement, or an action that should be expected; and *lho* mainly draws attention to or foregrounds information, though it can also express surprise. However, most research to date has focused on sentence-final particles or response tokens, leaving the interactional role of turn-initial resources, particularly in multiparty, naturally occurring conversation, underexplored. This gap is especially salient given the organisational importance of turn beginnings in structuring action and participation.

Conversation analysis views interaction as organised by a turn-taking system that regulates when and how turns are produced (Sacks et al., 1974). Turns are made up of turn-constructional units (TCUs), and when a TCU reaches a possible completion point, it creates transition relevance places (TRPs) where another speaker may take over. At these points, speakers may initiate new actions, often using turn-initial resources to show how the turn connects to previous talk (Schegloff, 1987b). Turn beginnings are pivotal in this system, as speakers deploy resources at turn onset, such as particles, response cries, and address terms, to manage stance, alignment, and participation before fully articulating the turn (Clayman, 2010; Hayashi, 2009; Keevallik et al., 2025). These resources enable speakers to shape the response space and guide recipients' interpretation of subsequent talk.

In multiparty interaction, participation frameworks shape turn design. Participants organise talk around who is being addressed, who is accountable for responding, and how rights to speak are distributed. Participants manage these frameworks dynamically through both talk and embodied conduct, such as gaze, body orientation, and gesture (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). In these environments, turn-initial resources play a key role in securing reciprocity and selecting next speakers. Participants also manage knowledge, access, and rights, displaying themselves as more or less knowledgeable (K+/K-) and negotiating epistemic gradients (Heritage, 2012). Turn-initial elements may help index uncertainty, asymmetry, or recalibrate the epistemic stance at the start of a turn.

Despite the established significance of turn beginnings in projecting action, the role of turn-initial particles as interactional mechanisms in Indonesian remains systematically underexplored. Current literature has yet to address how these particles account for epistemic access, participation, and the sequential organisation of question design in naturally occurring multiparty settings.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates *eh*-prefaced questions in Indonesian multiparty interaction. Specifically, it examines how speakers deploy *eh* at turn beginnings and the interactional work accomplished thereby. The analysis addresses three interrelated issues: (1) the

interactional contribution of *eh* in question design, (2) its distinction from the interrogative format it precedes, and (3) the role of turn-beginning resources in organising participation, epistemic stance, and sequence progression. Through conversation analysis of naturally occurring interaction, this study demonstrates how turn-initial particles shape action projection at the earliest possible point in the turn, offering new insights into the organisation of multiparty Indonesian talk-in-interaction.

METHOD

Study Design

This study is a qualitative conversation-analytic (CA) study of naturally occurring, video-recorded Indonesian multiparty interaction (Joyce et al., 2023; Raymond et al., 2024; Sidnell, 2013). It examines how speakers use the turn-initial particle *eh* in questions produced under next-speaker selection. Following the CA approach, the analysis focuses on the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction and on participants' observable orientations to action, participation, and epistemic relations. Rather than treating *eh* as a fixed pragmatic marker with a predetermined meaning, the study examines how its interactional significance emerges from its sequential position and its relationship to the action being performed. Conversation analysis (CA) is well suited to research objectives concerned with explaining how interactional actions, meanings, and social order are produced in real time. By studying naturally occurring talk and relying on turn-by-turn sequential analysis, CA uses participants' displayed understandings as evidence. Its design is well suited to investigating interactional patterns, repair, turn-taking, embodied conduct, and multimodal meaning-making, as audio/video data preserve the timing and contextual detail needed for such analysis. Methodologically, CA justifies claims through recurring patterns across case collections, supporting robust findings. However, CA is strongest for micro-level, process-focused questions and is less suited to making broad generalisations or addressing motives and attitudes not observable in interaction.

Participants

This study utilises a corpus of 9.5 hours of video-recorded Indonesian multiparty conversations, involving 88 participants across 24 naturally occurring interactions. Participants were recruited through personal networks and local advertisements in the Greater Jakarta area. The recorded interactions involved social groups rather than experimentally assembled participants, enabling analysis of interaction in socially familiar settings. Participants included family members, friends, neighbours, spouses, tutors, teachers, and students.

The participants had an average age of 38 years, and most had known one another for extended periods, with an average relationship duration of approximately 11 years. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and all names used in transcripts are pseudonyms. The study followed ethical guidelines for using video data, including obtaining permission to publish still images where relevant. The Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) approved the study under reference 5201700652, and it was carried out in accordance with relevant ethical guidelines.

All participants were bilingual or multilingual speakers of Indonesian and at least one regional language. The linguistic backgrounds represented in the corpus include Dayak, Betawi Malay, Batak, Minangkabau, Javanese, and Sundanese. Indonesian was the primary language of interaction in the recordings. Including multilingual speakers reflects the sociolinguistic characteristics of the interactional settings, not an attempt to compare ethnic or L1 groups. Participants were not selected based on their regional-language background, and the analysis did not treat L1 as an independent variable.

Accordingly, the present study does not assume that participants' L1 determines the realisation or interactional function of *eh*. Instead, regional-language backgrounds are treated as part of the participants' linguistic repertoires and interactional resources. Where speakers use regional languages or code-switch between Indonesian and a regional language, such practices are retained as part of the naturally occurring interactional context. The analysis of *eh*, however, focuses on its sequential and interactional deployment in Indonesian talk rather than on establishing a causal relationship between L1 background and particle realisation. Table 1 provides an overview of the participant composition and linguistic backgrounds available in the corpus.

Linguistic background refers to languages reported as spoken by participants and does not necessarily indicate first-language (L1) status. Indonesian was the principal language of the interactions analysed in this study. The linguistic backgrounds were not treated as independent analytical variables; rather, they describe the multilingual composition of the naturally occurring interactional data.

Given the corpus's multilingual composition, this study also examined whether *eh*-prefaced questions involved alternation between Indonesian and participants' regional languages. The analysed cases are predominantly formulated in Indonesian, and no systematic association was found between *eh*-prefacing and the use of a particular regional language. Some questions contain English lexical material or proper names, but these instances do not constitute a recurrent pattern of regional-language code mixing associated with *eh*. This study

therefore treats participants' multilingual repertoires as part of the sociolinguistic context of the interactions rather than as evidence that L1 background determines the realisation or

interactional function of *eh*. This distinction matters because the present study focuses on the sequential and interactional deployment of *eh* rather than variation in its realisation across linguistic groups.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Linguistic background	n	Female	Male
Indonesian + Betawi Malay	46	35	11
Indonesian + Betawi Malay + Sundanese	12	6	6
Indonesian + Javanese	7	2	5
Indonesian + Sundanese	5	4	1
Indonesian + Sundanese + English	4	4	0
Indonesian + Malay + Dayak	3	2	1
Indonesian + Javanese + English	3	3	0
Indonesian + English	2	1	1
Indonesian + Bataknese	1	1	0
Indonesian + Betawi Malay + Javanese	2	1	1
Indonesian + Minangkabaunese	1	1	0

Data Collection

Data were collected in a variety of everyday settings, including private homes, front yards, cafés, universities, and schools. These settings were selected not as experimental locations but because they provided access to naturally occurring interaction among participants who were already socially acquainted. The variety of settings also resulted in different participation frameworks, degrees of familiarity, spatial arrangements, and opportunities for embodied conduct.

Data collection lasted three months, with the researcher handling all the camcorders and audio recorders. Before each conversation, the researcher checked that all equipment worked and that everyone could be seen and heard. Participants were told they could record for as long as they wanted, and the researcher did not suggest any topics. After setting up, the researcher started the recording and left the participants to talk freely.

The researcher recorded the group interactions, not just individual participants. Participants were not asked to record themselves or follow specific conversation tasks. By recording in their usual social settings, the study could focus on natural interactions rather than responses to experiments. The researcher ensured the recordings captured both speech and visible actions. Because the groups and locations varied, the researcher adjusted the recording setup each time to ensure everyone could be seen and heard, while staying out of the conversation.

This procedure was especially important for the multimodal analysis of gaze and body orientation. The study did not use eye-tracking or motion-capture tools. Instead, the researcher noted these details from the video when they were clear enough to interpret. The analysis does not assume that gaze or body orientation was always visible for every participant. Recording natural conversations also allowed comparison across different group setups. For example, the data include times when

speakers look at or turn toward certain people, as well as group situations where attention shifts between several participants. These patterns are relevant because the study examines how questions are formulated and how speakers select next speakers.

Because the study used video recording, participants were told about it and gave consent before data collection. Knowing they were being recorded may have affected how they interacted, so the researcher does not claim the recordings are completely natural. However, the research design aimed to reduce the researcher's influence. First, the conversations happened naturally, not through set prompts or interviews. Second, participants talked with people they already knew in familiar places, not with strangers brought together for the study. Third, the researcher did not join in the conversations. Finally, the analysis looked at patterns across 24 different interactions, not just one event.

Data Analysis

The study adopts a conversation-analytic (CA) approach, focusing on the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction. All recordings were transcribed using established CA conventions (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017). Transcription included verbal detail, prosody, overlap, timing, and relevant embodied conduct, such as gaze direction and body orientation. The aim was to capture features needed to analyse turn beginnings, question design, and participation management.

Recordings were processed and analysed through a series of steps. Initially, each recording was assigned a code based on its order and recording date. Audio and video were synchronised using PluralEyes4 and edited in Adobe Premiere Pro CC 2018, which included the creation of split-screen effects. Subsequently, recordings were annotated for both spoken and embodied details using the ELAN linguistic annotation software (Version 5.7)

(Lausberg & Sletjes, 2016), as shown in Figure 1. Following annotation, conversation analysis transcription conventions (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013,

2017; Jefferson, 2004) were applied to transcribe the recordings in Microsoft Word 2016.

Figure 1
Annotation Software

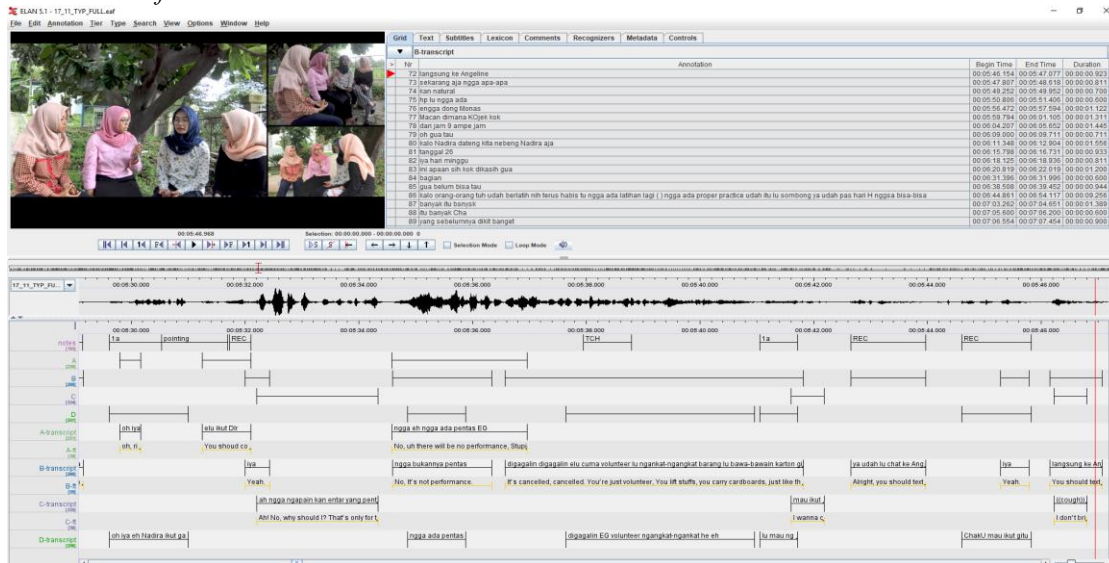


Figure 2 illustrates an example of an annotated transcript used in the analysis. Because the study data were not in English, a three-line transcription format was used. This included the original talk, a

morpheme-by-morpheme English gloss, and a bolded English translation (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013).

Figure 2
Annotated Transcript

A	B	C	D
(1)	"Dude, Where's my coffee?"	{30_11_X1_TYP_FH}	{01:02-01:13}
1	E (1.4)		
2	Toto → #ko [pi gua] mana, F		
	coffee 1SG WH G		
	Where's my coffee? H		
I	fig #fig.3 J		

Figure 2 presents the transcript features used in this study: each extract includes line number (A), title (B), recording code (C), and duration (D). The participant's name is indicated in (E). The first line of each transcript presents the Indonesian utterance (F), followed by a second line (G) with a word-by-word English gloss using the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie et al., 2008). The third line (H) provides a free English translation. Some transcripts also include integrated screenshot figures, with their timing marked by a "#" symbol on the first transcript line. When a screenshot is included, it appears on a separate line (I) and is labelled to match the figure number in the article (J).

In this extract, Toto, Adam, and Dani, three colleagues who have worked together for

approximately six years, are engaged in conversation. Before the excerpt, Toto and Dani discuss their recent work activities, while Adam goes to get coffee for himself without bringing any for the others. This leads Toto to ask a complaint-like question in line 2, after which the three participants humorously search for the coffee that was never provided. Following the 1.4-second silence in line 1, Toto initiates a new action in line 2 by asking "*kopi gua mana?*" [where is my coffee?]. His forward lean and gaze toward Dani provide embodied orientation to a possible recipient, while the interrogative format establishes an information request.

For analysis, questions were identified and categorised following the coding framework

proposed by Stivers and Enfield (2010) and Clayman and Heritage (2025). Only questions produced under next-speaker selection were included in the analysis, as this environment makes speakers' orientation to recipient design particularly visible. For the purposes of this study, this environment provides the clearest evidence for distinguishing the interactional work of *eh* from that of the interrogative format itself. If a question is addressed to a specific recipient, the absence of a response is publicly noticeable and accountable. Within the corpus, 1533 questions were identified, of which 70 involved *eh*-prefaced turns. Both single-case and collection-based conversation analytic techniques were employed. Single-case analysis focused on individual fragments to understand specific moments of interaction, whereas collection-based analysis grouped fragments to examine particular phenomena or domains and their variations (Schegloff, 1987a). Results were organised in Excel 2019 spreadsheets to track relevant practices, such as the use of particles, actions, speaker identity, and recipient gaze direction, across the datasets.

The five recurrent environments were derived inductively through close, sequential analysis of the 70 *eh*-prefaced questions. Each case was examined in relation to the preceding talk, the action implemented by the question, recipient selection, and relevant prosodic and embodied conduct. Comparison across cases revealed five recurring sequential environments: response pursuit, topic initiation, self-initiated repair, resumption of prior talk, and access to recipient knowledge. The categories were subsequently refined by comparing cases and checking them against the full dataset. Thus, they represent recurrent sequential environments rather than fixed pragmatic meanings of *eh*.

Instances of *eh*-prefacing were analysed inductively through repeated close examination of their sequential environments. Each case was examined in relation to (a) its position within the turn and (b) the action it accomplished. Although quantitative distributions provide an overview of patterning, the analysis prioritises sequential and interactional evidence over frequency counts, consistent with conversation-analytic methodology. The study, therefore, treats it not as a fixed pragmatic marker but as a context-sensitive, turn-beginning resource whose function is shaped by its sequential and participation environment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesian speakers select from a range of particles when questioning, such as *ya* and *kan* to indicate the degree of commitment to a proposition (Hamdani &

Barnes, 2018), or *loh* to clarify an initial action (Wijaya, 2022). These particles reflect Indonesia's cultural and linguistic diversity.

Table 2 summarises the distribution of questions with particles ($n=481$) across the 1533 questions arising from next-speaker selection data. Indonesian speakers used 13 different particles in nearly one-third of all questions, with *ya*, *eh*, *sih*, and *kan* being the most common.

Table 2
Distribution of Particles across Next-Speaker Selection

No.	Particle	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ya	260	54.10
2	Eh	70	14.60
3	Sih	62	12.90
4	Kan	39	8.10
5	Oh	22	4.60
6	Kok	10	2.10
7	Dong	9	1.90
8	Lah	4	0.80
9	Ih	1	0.20
10	Ah	1	0.20
11	Loh	1	0.20
12	Toh	1	0.20
13	Mah	1	0.20

Although *ya* is the most frequent particle in the corpus (54.1%), accounting for more than half of the particle-prefaced questions, the present study focuses on *eh* because its relatively infrequent occurrence provides a particularly revealing site for examining turn-initial action formation. The analytical interest of *eh* lies not in its frequency but in its position at the onset of questions and its recurrent association with different sequential environments. In the data examined here, *eh*-prefaced questions occur in response pursuit, topic initiation, self-initiated repair, resumption of prior talk, and epistemic-access environments. These cases show that *eh* does not contribute a single context-independent meaning; rather, its interactional significance emerges from its sequential placement and its relationship to the action projected by the ensuing interrogative. The more frequent *ya*-prefaced questions consequently serve as an important background contrast, while *eh* offers a more focused opportunity to investigate how a turn-initial particle participates in projecting action and organising participation.

Table 3 shows the interactional environments observed in the question corpus. The interactional environments are presented in descending order of frequency, from most to least frequent, to provide a clear overview of the distribution of *eh*-prefaced questions in the dataset. *Eh*-prefacing primarily initiates topics and marks resumptions, accounting for over 64% of its occurrences.

Table 3

Distribution of Features of eh-Prefacing

Interactional environment	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Topic initiation	26	37.14
Resumption of prior talk	19	27.14
Self-initiated repair	11	15.71
Response pursuit	8	11.43
Access to recipient knowledge	6	8.57
Total	70	100.00

Table 3 shows that topic initiation is the most frequent environment, with 26 cases (37.14%), followed by resumption of prior talk, with 19 cases (27.14%). Self-initiated repair accounts for 11 cases (15.71%), while response pursuit occurs in 8 cases (11.43%). Access to recipient knowledge is the least frequent environment, with 6 cases (8.57%). These findings show that *eh*-prefacing occurs across several sequential environments rather than expressing a single context-independent function. The five categories were derived inductively through close sequential analysis and comparison across the 70 cases.

Eh-Prefacing and Action Formation in Questions: A Contrastive Analysis

This section compares *eh*-prefaced and non-prefaced questions in similar sequential environments, showing that *eh* reconfigures the action implemented by the interrogative forms. Interrogative formats generally perform core actions, such as requesting information. However, the analysis shows that using *eh* at turn beginnings modifies how these actions are interpreted relative

to prior talk. *Eh*-prefacing appears in situations of interactional contingency. In these cases, it turns questions from initial inquiries into actions such as response pursuits and repair solutions. This contrastive analysis highlights the interactional work done beyond the interrogative format itself.

Response pursuit

Extract (1) features three co-workers, Toto, Adam, and Dani, who have known each other for about six years. Before this excerpt, Toto and Dani discussed their recent work activities. Adam went to get coffee for himself, but not for the others. As a result, Toto launches a complaint-like question in line 2, and they start searching for a non-existent coffee. This analysis examines the notable details present in lines 2 and 7. The following figures illustrate Toto's gaze and bodily orientation toward Dani and his subsequent gaze orientation during the production of the *eh*-prefaced question. Figure 3 shows the interactional setting and Toto's orientation when the question is produced. Here, Toto leans forward, gazes downward, and then directs his gaze toward Dani.

Figure 3

Toto Leans Forward, Gazes Down, and Gazes at Dani



Figure 4 shows the participants' embodied orientation at the point where the *eh*-prefaced question is produced. In particular, the figure captures the speaker's bodily orientation and gaze

toward the relevant recipient, providing visual evidence of how recipient orientation accompanies the verbal turn. At this point, Toto gazes toward neither Adam nor Dani.

Figure 4

Toto Gazes Neither at Adam nor Dani



(1) "Dude, Where's my coffee?" (30_11_X1_TYP_FH) [01:02-01:13]

- 1 (1.4)
 2 Toto → #ko[pi gua] mana,
 coffee 1SG WH
Where's my coffee?
 fig #fig.3
 3 Dani [aha hah]
Aha hah
 4 [(0.5)
 [((Toto maintains his gaze at Dani, Dani gazes away, Adam gazes
 down))
 5 Dani \$mana,= lu mesen ga?\$
 WH 2SG order NEG
Where {did it go}? {Did} you even order it?
 6 [(1.1)
 [((all participants gaze elsewhere))
 7 Toto → #↑EH, (0.3) [kopi satu ↑lagi mana]dam,
 INTJ coffee one more WH NAME
Eh (0.3) Where is the other coffee, Dam?
 fig #fig.4
 8 Dani [↑emang mesen berapa ↑dam,]
 indeed order WH NAME
How many {coffees} did {you} really order, Dam?
 9 (1.0)
 10 Adam <teu apal>
 NEG.SUNDANESE know.SUNDANESE
{I} don't know

In line 2, Toto asks, "*kopi gua mana?*" [where's my coffee?] and gazes at Dani (Figure 3). As the question is not specifically addressed, any participant could respond. Dani laughs in line 3. During the silence in line 4, Dani and Adam both look around the room to find Toto's coffee. In line 5, while all participants, including Dani and Adam, search for the coffee, even under the table, Dani asks Toto if he ordered it. Toto then poses another question in line 7, this time using *eh*-prefacing and addressing Adam at the end of the turn. In line 8, Dani also uses a post-positioned address term and asks Adam how many cups of coffee were ordered.

Another silence occurs in line 9. Ultimately, Adam replies in Sundanese, "*teu apal*" [I don't know].¹

In line 7, Toto uses *eh* to signal that the question is directed at Adam and to emphasise Adam's lack of response (Figure 4). This provides an alternative way to elicit an answer, clarifying the connection to the earlier question (Romaniuk, 2013). Although the interrogative format again constitutes an information request, adding *eh* at the

¹ Both Adam and Toto are Sundanese, while Dani comes from Minangkabau. It is common for Indonesian speakers to code-switch between their local languages and Indonesian during conversations.

beginning of the turn is interactionally significant. The particle creates a boundary between the turn-entry element and the subsequent turn-constructional unit, distinguishing the turn from the previous inquiry. Notably, the *eh*-prefaced question is retrospectively linked to the prior, unanswered question. It signals the speaker's orientation to response failure and redefines the action as a pursuit of the earlier inquiry (Stivers & Rossano, 2010). The use of the recipient's name (Adam) further reconfigures the participation framework from a general address to a targeted next-speaker selection (Lerner, 2003).

Topic initiation

Initiating new sequences is fundamental to the progression of talk-in-interaction. Previous research demonstrates that topic nominations, such as itemised news enquiries and news announcements, function as essential mechanisms for generating subsequent topics (Button & Casey, 1985). Topic

initiation constitutes the commencement of a new sequence of action.

The following extract illustrates *eh*-prefacing in contexts where topic initiation follows possible sequence closure. Rather than simply introducing a new topic, *eh*-prefaced turns occur when prior sequences have reached potential completion, thereby establishing a transition-relevant environment for initiating a new course of action.

Extract (2) presents two examples of topic initiation, each implementing a distinct social action: a request for confirmation and an assessment. In this extract, the conversation occurs among friends from the same district in West Kalimantan. The participants attend the same university and previously resided in the same dormitory. Prior to this, they discussed their mothers' home cooking. Attention is directed to the arrowed turns in lines 20 and 46. Figure 5 illustrates Rini's shift in gaze to the left and then upward during the production of the *eh*-prefaced question.

Figure 5

Rini Shifts Gaze to the Left and Gazes Up



(2) "Cosy" (19_11_2_X7_TYP_FH) [10:11-11:09]

- 1 Novi tapi beda la_{gi}: dari posisi kita sekaRA:NG kita_
but unlike again. from position 1PL. now 1PL
But things are different now that we live on our own.
- 2 ja[uh dari]orang tu_a .HH ↑eh mau makan PUN harus_
far from parents PRT want eat PRT must
.HH If we want to eat, we have to cook.
- 3 ma_{sa}:k, ga ma_{sa}k ga ↑makan, ataupun, .HH (0.2)
cook NEG cook NEG eat or
If we don't, we go hungry or. HH (0.2), we can just
- 4 tinggal beli(.) [ya ↑beli
just buy PRT buy
buy food (.) if we feel like it.
- 5 Arya [iya:]
INTJ
Yeah
- 6 Rini [mau BELI ↑PUN[↑Mikir↑
want buy PRT think
If we want to buy, we'll think twice

((12 lines of transcript omitted, participants talk about food))

- 19 Novi ya:: \$gitu deh\$ ha hah=
PRT like.that PRT
Well, that's all.

- 20 Rini →=eh KALAU masalah tempat; wisata_
PRT if about place tourism
Eh, speaking of tourist places to visit,
- 21 di sini sih, banyak ya?
LOC PRT many PRT
there are a lot around here, right?
- 22 (0.2)
- 23 Arya ya emang [banyak_
PRT indeed many
Yeah, many of them, indeed.
- 24 Novi [ya tapi belum< (.)
INTJ but not.yet
Yeah, but not yet (.)
- 25 belum sem[PET TA↑U: HA HAH
not.yet able you.know
We just don't have time, you know.
- 26 Arya [belum sempit \$jalan-jalan\$
not.yet able RED.walk
Yeah, no time to walk around
- ((13 lines of transcript omitted, participants discuss tourism places in Jakarta))
- 40 (2.1)
- 41 Novi bang haji ↑ayo::
NAME come.on
Come on, guys!
- 42 [(0.3)
- 43 Rini → #↑eh tempat INI adem banget ya;
PRT place DET cosy very PRT
Eh, this place feels so cosy, right?
- 44 #fig.5
(0.3)
- 45 Novi ↑ya: adem banget;
INTJ cosy very
Yeah, really cosy

Novi asserts that they must struggle when living away from their parents (lines 1-4), and Rini and Arya express agreement (lines 5-6). Following a sequence-closing turn at line 19, Rini gazes upward and initiates a confirmation-seeking turn: “*eh kalau masalah tempat wisata di sini sih banyak ya?*” [eh speaking of tourist places to visit, there are many here, right?]. In their responses, Arya and Novi confirm that Jakarta offers many tourist attractions, although they lack the time to explore them.

During the omitted lines, the participants discuss specific locations they should have visited before returning permanently to West Kalimantan. After a long silence at line 40, Novi gazes at Arya and imitates a comedian's joke. At line 43, Rini shifts her gaze to a tree on her left and looks upward (see Figure 5). She seeks agreement with the assessment: “*eh tempat ini adem banget ya?*” [eh, this place is very cosy, right?]. Novi replies with a partial repeat, “*ya adem banget*” [yeah, it's very cosy] (Chang, 2025), thereby affirming the previous assessment.

The two eh-prefaced turns occur at points where Rini identifies potential sequence or topic closures in lines 19 and 43; these function as markers of a sequence-closing turn or topic shift. Subsequently, Rini initiates a new sequence or introduces a new topic, marking a shift from the

prior topic. A comparable sequential environment is observed in line 43, when Rini concludes a series of sequences and leaves a prolonged silence (2.1). Rini delays topic initiation until a recognisable transition-relevance place (TRP) after Novi's self-selection in line 41. These eh-prefaced turns appear at distinct sequential boundaries, including post-completion and post-lapse environments. The interrogative format conveys the action, while the particle “*eh*” indicates its sequential status, initiating a new course of action. In these extracts, eh-prefaced turns function not as topic markers, but as boundary markers that enable topic initiation.

Self-initiated repair

The organisation of repair demonstrates how participants manage ongoing turns when troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding can be problematic for emerging talk. Typically, self-initiated repairs occur within the current turn, allowing the speaker to resolve the trouble source and thereby achieve interactional accomplishment (Schegloff, 1997). Eh-prefacing is also systematically deployed in environments involving trouble in speaking or formulation, where speakers initiate repair. In these cases, the question serves as a request for information, while *eh* marks the speaker's orientation to trouble in the ongoing turn.

Through these actions, speakers demonstrate their epistemic status, while co-participants assume an epistemic stance that reflects specific interactional objectives (Bespala et al., 2024; Wei & Wang, 2025).

Extract (3) captures a conversation among four schoolteachers: Nina, Yuli, Vita, and Alia. The teachers are seated on the floor, preparing stick flags for camping games. Earlier, they discussed important equipment for a school camp. Before this extract, Alia suggested that Nina use black tape to

strengthen the flags. Nina believed she had seen the tape elsewhere and began searching for it (Figure 6). The analysis focuses on the turns at lines 4 and 17.

The following figures illustrate the participants' gaze and bodily orientation during the production of the eh-prefaced questions, highlighting the role of embodied conduct in the unfolding interaction. Figure 6 shows Nina directing her gaze downward as she searches for something, while Figure 7 shows Vita tilting her head and then gazing at Nina.

Figure 6

Nina Gazes Down, Looking for Something



Figure 7

Vita Tilts Her Head, then Gazes at Nina



(3) "Where's the black tape?" (22_11_X3_TYP_FH) [13:39-13:58]

- 1 [*#*(4.5)
 [*#*fig.6
- 2 Nina → ma[↑]na double tape item [↑]ya?
 WH black PRT
 Where's {the} black double-sided tape?
- 3 (0.1)
- 4 Nina → so- EH solatip item [↑]mana YA?
 PRT tape black WH PRT
 Eh, where's the black tape?
- 5 (0.9)
- 6 Nina liat [↑]ga guys?
 see NEG
 Guys, did any of you spot it?

- 7 (0.4)
 8 Vita e[ʔmang] ada taro sini ʔna?
 Actually be keep here NAME
Did you} really put it somewhere around here, Na?
 9 Yuni [°no°]
No
 10 (0.4)
 11 Alia °di da[lam plastik° ʔDONG
 inside plastic.bag PRT
It should be in {the} plastic bag.
 12 Yuni [aku belum pernah [liat_
 1SG NEG ever see_
I've never seen {it}.
 13 Nina [iniʔ >belum- belum<
 DEM not.yet
This not- I haven't even
 14 aku keluar-keluarIN yang kemaʔren (0.1)
 1SG RDP.unpack REL yesterday
unpacked it {since} yesterday.
 15 (0.1)
 16 Nina oh ini_ MASYA ALLAH=
 PRT DET EXCL.MUSLIM
Oh, found it! God has willed it!
 17 Vita → =#EH kataʔNYA onde-ONDEʔ-(>eh apa<
 PRT say.DET polka-dot PRT WH
Eh, someone said that polka-dot- (> Eh, you know,
 18 koTAK onde-onʔde bawaʔ
 box polka-dot bring
do {we} bring the Polka-dot boxes {with us}?
 fig #fig.7
 19 (0.1)
 20 Nina IYA_ bawa seʔmua_
 INTJ bring all
Yeah, bring them all.

After an extended search for the black tape, Nina initiates a self-initiated repair in line 2 and repeats her inquiry in line 4. This turn receives no immediate response, resulting in a 0.9-second silence in the following line. Nina then asks all participants in line 6 if they have seen the tape. Over lines 8-12, Vita, Alia, and Yuli respond with delays. In lines 13 and 14, Nina clarifies her confidence regarding the tape's location, stating, "*ini belum aku keluar-keluarin yang kemaren*" [I did not unpack this since yesterday]. Finally, Nina locates the tape under a box in line 16. Subsequently, Vita tilts her head, looks at Nina, and suggests bringing all polka-dot boxes to the camping ground (line 17).

Nina's difficulty formulating her turn led to a self-initiated self-repair trajectory in the form of a transition-space repair in line 4. The eh-prefaced turn serves as a resource for drawing her friend's attention. As illustrated in Figure 6, Nina does not visually orient herself toward the other participants or direct her gaze at them. She also acknowledges that her friends are disengaged from the conversation, instead focusing on craft activities, as indicated in line 1. After a brief pause, Nina fixes her previous turn and changes it into "*eh solatip item mana ya?*" [eh, where's the black tape?] (line 4), indicating she realises she is looking for regular black tape rather than black double-sided tape.

The second eh-prefaced turn, however, occurs in lines 17-18. After Nina locates the black tape in line 16, Vita takes the floor immediately when the sequential environment is less problematic. Vita then looks toward Nina and interrupts her own turn with self-initiated self-repair through recycling (Schegloff, 2013). She begins this turn with "*eh katanya onde-onde*" [eh, someone said that polka-dot-], using a cut-off (Laakso & Sorjonen, 2010), and then recycles her turn with "*eh apa kotak onde-onde bawa?*" [eh, you know, {we} bring the polka-dot boxes {with us}?). This confirmation request also demonstrates tacit addressing, which identifies who is eligible to respond to the initial action in the sequence (Lerner, 2003).

In this extract, Nina produces an initial question, "*mana double tape item ya?*" [where is the black double-sided tape?], followed by a reformulated version prefaced with eh. The second version, "*eh solatip item mana ya?*" [eh, where is the black tape?] is not merely a repetition but a repair solution (Enfield, 2015). Here, eh occurs at the boundary of a transition space and indicates that the speaker is revising the prior formulation. The particle thus indexes a break in the progressivity of talk and projects a modified version of the action. A similar phenomenon appears in Vita's turn at line 17, where eh co-occurs with cut-offs and recycling. The particle precedes a reformulated question and

aligns with a trajectory of self-initiated self-repair, projecting that the speaker is recycling her action.

Resumption of prior talk

Research on practices for linking back to prior talk shows that participants draw on embodied actions and interpretative practices to rebuild connections with earlier sequences (Schubert, 2025; Zinken & Küttner, 2022). The following analysis examines how Indonesian speakers use *eh*-prefacing to mark resumptions of questioning turns. Mazeland and Huiskes (2001, p. 145) define a resumption marker as a turn that is “moved away from when the abandoned line is picked up again”. This involves how a speaker recalls or resumes a story or topic after an interruption and then resumes the talk. By marking the turn as contingent on prior disruption, *eh* enhances the accountability of the resumed

action. In this sense, *eh* functions as a turn-entry device that projects the resumption of an action trajectory.

Extract (4) is from a conversation between schoolmates, Dira, Caca, Dini, and Turi. Prior to this, all participants discussed a classmate whose hair-dyeing attempt had gone wrong. Dira informed Turi that she had recently viewed the classmate’s Instagram story, as indicated in line 1. Later, Dini introduced a new topic by asking Caca about a fishpond behind her, as seen at lines 2 and 4. The following ten omitted lines show all participants continuing the discussion of the fishpond. The analysis focuses on the marked turn in line 23. Figure 8 shows Turi’s orientation toward Dira and Dira’s simultaneous backward gaze, highlighting the participants’ embodied conduct as the sequence unfolds.

Figure 8

Turi Gazes at Dira, while Dira Looks Backward



(4) “What’s the story?” (17_11_X23_TYP_FH) [01:57–02:23]

- 1 Dira >eh ENGGAK↑[YANG kocak tuh yang lstory dia yang
PRT NEG REL funny DEM REL 3SG REL
Eh, wait, the funny thing about her is the story
- 2 Dini [>eh itu apaan sih,<]
PRT DEM WH PRT
Eh, what’s that?
- 3 pernah< (0.1) >yang pernah gua bilang [ama ELU tuh<
ever REL ever 1SG tell with 2SG DEM
I {have} ever (0.1) I have ever told you.
- 4 Dini [itu apaan sih,=
DIST WH PRT
Eh, what’s that?
- 5 =penang↑karan ↑lele?
farm catfish
A catfish farm?
- 6 (0.3)
- 7 Caca bukan deh=kayaknya ↑ituan DAH=
NEG PRT seem DEM PRT
No, I think it’s something else.
- 8 Turi =udang ↑kali?
shrimp maybe
Maybe {a} shrimp (farm)?

(9 lines of transcript omitted, Dira and Turi nominate candidate understandings)

- 18 Dira → EH en-(0.3) [>ke sono- ke sono pake apaan †ege,<
PRT LOC LOC use WH stupid
Eh (0.3) how {are we} supposed to get there?
19 Dira [((pushes Caca's thigh with her knee))
20 (0.6)
21 Dira oh naek (.) >°liat liat liat°<
oh use see see see
Oh, using (.) Look! Look! Look!
22 (0.1)
23 Turi → =eh† story #†apaan †dir.
PRT WH NAME
Eh, what kind of story is it, Dir?
fig #fig.8
24 (0.6)
25 Dira [ya:[ng†
REL
It's-
26 Dira [((turns her body and gazes at Turi))
27 Dini [JA[NGAN gossip †tau;=
NEG gossip know
Stop gossiping!
28 Dini [((slaps Turi on the thigh))
29 Dira =yang VS-[VS] itu†
REL RDP.NAME.BRAND. DEM
It's {about} VS.
30 Turi [°oh iya°]
oh INTJ
Oh, right.

At line 18, Dira looks behind her, pushes Caca on the thigh, and asks Caca how to get to the fishpond. Caca does not respond immediately, creating silence at line 20. As Caca gazes at the fishpond, Dira appears to realise the route (line 21). In line 23, Turi asks, “*eh story apaan dir?*” [eh, what kind of story is it, Dir?], referring to the previous topic at lines 1 and 3. As Dira begins to respond at line 25, Dini overlaps and asks Turi to stop gossiping, even slapping Turi on her thigh. Dira restarts her previous TCU beginning and answers the question in line 29.

In this case, eh-prefacing indicates a departure from the story about a classmate that was halted in the previous talk. It shows how activities in lines 2 to 21 disrupt the progression of the telling, and it suggests that Turi wants to utilise the preface. In different social actions, Mazeland and Huiskes (2001) highlighted the use of *maar* [but] in Dutch that marks a resumption of the telling after being interrupted by other-initiated repair. Turi initiates her turn with eh-prefacing, selects Dira as the next speaker at line 23, and maintains gaze toward her (see Figure 8), who looks backwards during the question. Here, Turi displays her engagement in the conversation, shapes the participation framework, and highlights her embodied activity through gaze and bodily orientation to the recipient (see Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). In response, Dira turns her body and establishes a mutual gaze with Turi before replying to her question in line 29.

This extract also portrays how knowledge is distributed in interaction. Among all participants,

only Dira and Turi have developed common ground, but it remains largely within Dini's epistemic domain. That is, the eh-prefaced question serves as a stance marker to recall what is happening in the Instagram story. In terms of epistemic gradient, Turi's question also shows that she is less knowledgeable (K-) or holds an unknowing stance toward the information. From an interactional perspective, this case shows that eh-prefacing operates in environments where the distribution of knowledge between interactants drives sequence expansion and closure (Heritage, 2012). By indexing this progression at turn beginnings, eh projects a trajectory in which the action's relevance depends on the recipient's knowledge.

Access to recipient knowledge

Epistemic considerations in interaction have become an increasingly prominent focus within conversation analysis (Blythe et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2024; Enfield et al., 2012; Grzech, 2021; Mitchell & Jordan, 2021; Stevanovic, 2023; Stirling et al., 2022). Enfield et al. (2012, p. 221) argue that sentence-final particles in polar questions function as devices “that interact with the pragmatics of the speech event and its inherent epistemic asymmetries”.

In extract (5), the conversation returns to Novi, Rini, and Arya. Before this extract, Novi and Rini described their drama rehearsal to Arya. In lines 1-6, Novi reports that participants were divided into two drama groups based on their assignments. Following Rini's preferred response at line 3, Novi expresses

surprise at performing a Papuan dance rather than her traditional Dayak dance in lines 4-6. We focus on the turns at lines 9, 13, 17, and 123-124. Figure 9 illustrates Novi's gaze and pointing gesture toward Arya, while Arya directs her gaze downward. The

figure highlights how Novi's visual and gestural conduct orients toward Arya as the relevant participant, while Arya's downward gaze displays a different embodied orientation at this point in the interaction.

Figure 9

Novi Gazes at and Points Toward Arya, while Arya Gazes Downward



- (5) "Moana" (19_11_2_X7_TYP_FH) [13:10-15:27]
- 1 Novi >lalu kita di-(0.3).hh ↑apa (.)dibagi dua kelomPOK<
then 1PL WH PASS.divide two group
Then we're (0.3) .hh what (.) divided into two groups
(0.3)
- 2
- 3 Rini >ya ya [ya<
INTJ INTJ INTJ
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
- 4 Novi [>kita pi↑kir kita yang kalimANTAN<(0.1)
1PL think 1PL REL NAME.ISLAND
We expected to do Kalimantan dance(0.1)
- 5 >nari ↑kalimantan<= ↑eh \$ternyata↑\$ (0.3)
dance NAME.ISLAND PRT turn.out
since we are from there, eh, (0.3)
- 6 >kita tuh disuruh nari paPUA (.) tapi seru
1PL DET PAS.tell dance NAME.PROVINCE but cool
but we're asked to do Papuan dance instead. But,
banget sumPAH<
so swear
it was fun.
(0.4)
- 9 Novi → >pas pertama kita nari pake gaya >>↑gini-gini ya,<<
when first 3SG dance use move like.this PRT
As soon as we tried those moves like this,
(0.3)↑gua tuh inget filmNYA↑ moana;
1SG DET remember film.DET NAME.film
I was instantly reminded of the movie Moana
(0.1)
- 12 Rini ha hah=
Aha hah (nodding)
- 13 Arya → =\$oh [↑yang [tak] tak] ha ha[hah\$
oh REL aha ha hah
Oh, the one with "tak tak"? Aha hah
[melodic sound]
- 14 Rini [ha hah]
Aha hah
- 15 Novi [iya_
INTJ
Yeah
- 16 (0.2)
- 17 Novi → [make[↑wa:y↑ make ↑wa:y↑] he he hah
Make way. Make way. Aha hah
[((singing))]

- 18 Rini [>novi sepanjang latihan↑ ngelawak terus↑<
NAME during exercise joke all.the.time
Novi made everyone laugh with those moves.
(92 lines of transcript omitted, all participants discuss
their activities at dormitory))
- 111 (0.8)
112 Novi [make [↑wa:y make ↑wa:y] \$lagu moana::↑\$.HH
song NAME.FILM
Make way. Make way. That's from the Moana song
[singing]
- 113 Arya [(gazes at Novi, mutual gaze))
- 114 (0.6)
115 Novi → >eh #pernah nonTON< ↑MOANA?
PRT ever watch NAME.FILM
Eh, have {you} watched Moana?
#fig 9
- 116 (0.6)
117 Arya eng↑gak
NEG
No
- 118 (0.4)
119 Novi ya:h RIN kita udah berapa kali rin↑
PRT NAME 1PL already WH times NAME
Well, Rin, tell him! How many times we've watched
- 120 >moana RIN↑<
NAME.MOVIE NAME
Moana, Rin?
- 121 (0.1)
122 Novi udah [↑ga kehi↑tung.
already NEG PASS.count
It's hard to count.
- 123 Arya → [.hh tapi yang tau ↑sih, kalau >yang FILM-FILM
but REL know PRT if REL RED.film
But from what I've seen, you know,
- 124 papua itu lucu-lucu↑<
NAME.PROVINCE that funny.RED
the Papuan films are funny

Novi gazes at Arya and self-selects in line 9, bringing up a new but related topic. Novi explains that Papuan dance is like what she has seen in Moana, an animated musical film. Arya's response at line 13 shows recognition, and he mimics "tak tak" [hitting sounds], indicating he knows the film. Novi self-selects at line 17 and sings part of the film's lyrics. In line 122, Novi sings again and explains that the song comes from Moana. Following this, they establish mutual gaze. In line 115, Novi selects Arya as the targeted recipient with "eh pernah nonton Moana?" [eh, have you watched the film Moana?] accompanied by a pointing gesture (Figure 9). Arya provides a disconfirming response at line 117 (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013). Over lines 119 to 122, Novi and Rini explain that they have watched the film many times, before Arya self-selects from lines 123 to 124.

The exchanges in lines 1-10 show how participation happens through sharing knowledge. An interesting fact arises in lines 9-10, when Novi self-selects and mentions "Moana" for the first time. Arya responds by displaying his knowledge, starting with a change-of-state token. Novi shares her emotional stance (Stevanovic & Frick, 2014) by

singing a verse from "Moana" at line 17. Novi repeats the verse and then explains that it is from Moana (line 112). As in the previous extract, Novi launches a question prefaced with eh, indicating that she presupposes Arya as an unknowing recipient. This may have emerged because Arya does not respond significantly when Novi sings the song's verses at 17 and 112, which may trigger recognition of the song. These epistemic configurations formulate "the basis for sequence initiation" (Heritage, 2013, p. 388) that Novi utilises to form her question. In this way, these epistemic configurations source both turn-taking and sequence organisation.

Another key point is that Arya downgrades his epistemic status from knowing (K+) in line 13 to unknowing (K-) in line 117, and from a strong to a weak assertion. He then attempts to upgrade his (K+) claim in lines 123-124, stating, "tapi yang tau sih kalau yang film-film Papua itu lucu-lucu" [but as far as I know, you know, the Papuan films are so funny]. This shift reflects dynamic epistemic positioning (Bozbiyik & Morton, 2024), as Arya recalibrates his displayed knowledge in response to the interactional context and potential challenges to

his prior claim. Arya's effort is quite odd because he assumes that Papuan people inspire Moana, whereas it actually refers to a fictional island drawing on Polynesian cultures.

This extract offers a related but analytically distinct case, in which *eh*-prefacing adjusts epistemic stance in the design of a question (Chen et al., 2024; Heritage & Raymond, 2021; Linares-Bernabéu, 2023). The interrogative format solicits information about the recipient's knowledge or experience, positioning the recipient as a potential K+. However, here, the speaker's use of *eh* more explicitly fine-tunes the turn's epistemic positioning. It also operates at the level of action trajectory, marking the question as contingent on the interaction's epistemic configuration.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how *eh*-prefaced questions function in Indonesian multiparty conversation, with particular attention to *eh*'s interactional contribution, its relationship to the interrogative format it precedes, and its role in organising participation, epistemic stance, and sequence progression. The findings indicate that *eh*-prefacing in Indonesian questions serves as a systematic resource for action formation within interaction. Contrastive analysis reveals that interrogative formats perform core actions, such as information requests, whereas *eh* operates at the level of action trajectory, specifying how these actions should be interpreted in relation to preceding talk. Conversation analysis of multiparty interactions shows that *eh* does not alter propositional content or grammatical interrogative form; instead, it contributes to the action trajectory by contextualising the interrogative in relation to the preceding sequence. Unlike the interrogative format, which typically seeks information, *eh*-prefacing alters how the action is understood in light of earlier talk.

Across environments of response pursuit, self-initiated repair, resumption of suspended courses of action, and epistemic access, *eh* systematically occurs at turn onset when the prior sequence is problematic, incomplete, or contingently relevant. In these environments, *eh*-prefacing signals that the ongoing sequence requires continuation, recalibration, or redirection. The analysis demonstrates that the *eh*-prefaced question is designed relative to the prior sequence, making its continuation conditionally relevant and thereby mobilising a response under strengthened conditions of accountability.

A central contribution of this study is to demonstrate that *eh*-prefacing operates through early action projection. By marking departures from prior expectations, returns to previously suspended matters, or shifts in epistemic orientation at the

earliest possible point in the turn, *eh* provides recipients with advance cues for interpreting the action in progress. This supports and extends conversation-analytic accounts of turn beginnings as critical loci of action formation (Steenisg et al., 2023), demonstrating that action is implemented not only through grammatical design but also prefigured through turn-initial resources.

Importantly, the findings also clarify the relationship between *eh* and interrogative formats. While participants treat non-prefaced questions as initial requests, they repeatedly orient *eh*-prefaced questions as second-positioned or contingent actions, such as pursuing prior questions, offering repair solutions, or resuming. This contrast provides direct evidence that *eh* operates at the level of action formation rather than sentence type, addressing a key gap in prior cross-linguistic research on Indonesian particles. The findings contribute to a growing body of work on turn-initial elements such as *oh*, *well*, and Japanese *eh* (Hayashi, 2009), which have been shown to index shifts in epistemic stance, sequence organisation, or discourse orientation. Like these particles, Indonesian *eh* functions as a resource for managing sequential contingency and epistemic alignment, but in ways sensitive to the specific interactional dynamics of Indonesian multiparty talk. The study thus supports the view that turn-initial particles constitute a cross-linguistically recurrent but locally adapted class of interactional resources.

For Indonesian linguistics, this study provides a detailed interactional account of *eh*-prefacing in naturally occurring conversation, extending prior work that has largely focused on sentence-final particles or decontextualised pragmatic functions. By situating *eh* within the sequence, the analysis shows the importance of treating particles as dynamic resources in day-to-day interaction, particularly in multilingual contexts where speakers draw on a rich repertoire of pragmatic forms. More broadly, the findings contribute to cross-linguistic interaction studies by showing how a turn-initial particle can participate in action projection, recipient orientation, epistemic access, and participation management. The Indonesian data further demonstrate that the interactional import of such particles emerges from their sequential environment and their coordination with interrogative design and embodied conduct, rather than from fixed pragmatic meanings alone. This suggests that cross-linguistic research should examine not only formally comparable particles across languages, but also the interactional work they accomplish in particular sequential contexts. In this way, the study contributes to a broader Conversation Analytic understanding of how linguistic resources at turn beginnings organise social action.

The analysis focuses only on question production and does not examine recipient

responses to eh-prefaced questions, leaving open how such prefacing may shape response design and sequence outcomes (Jørgensen, 2024). Additionally, while five recurrent functions were identified, these do not exhaust the full range of possible uses of eh or other turn-initial particles in Indonesian interaction. Future research could examine recipient responses, explore eh-prefaced action types, and pursue cross-linguistic comparisons to clarify how turn-initial particles contribute to the organisation of social action.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that turn-initial particles such as eh are not peripheral discourse markers but central resources for organising action, participation, and epistemics in conversation. Examining these elements through fine-grained sequential analysis offers important insights into how interaction is organised moment by moment in Indonesian and across languages.

AI USE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AI tools assisted with language editing, grammatical checking, and improving the manuscript's clarity and readability. The authors reviewed and revised the AI-assisted suggestions and took full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the article. AI tools were not used as a substitute for the authors' analysis of the conversational data or their scholarly judgement.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

Author 1 conceptualised the study, collected and analysed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the initial manuscript. Author 2 contributed to the development of the research design, interpretation of the findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for its content.

REFERENCES

- Arita, Y. (2021). Display of concession: Maa-Prefaced responses to polar questions in Japanese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 186, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.09.014>
- Arita, Y. (2023). Demo “but”-prefaced responses to inquiry in Japanese. *Discourse Processes*, 60(8), 594–611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2023.2255501>
- Arita, Y. (2024). An interactional practice of registering expectation discrepancy: The use of the turn-initial token are in Japanese. *Discourse Processes*, 61(10), 524–546. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2024.2381405>
- Benetó, N. S. (2023). Challenging askability through particles: uei-prefaced responses in Catalan. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 218, 6–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.09.016>
- Bespala, L., Meyerhoff, M., & Albury, C. (2024). Navigating epistemic challenges: Self-initiated self-repair in weight loss discussions within clinical settings. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 233, 51–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2024.09.003>
- Blythe, J., Mushin, I., Stirling, L., & Gardner, R. (2022). The epistemics of social relations in Murrinhpatha, Garrwa and Jaru conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 191, 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.01.006>
- Bolden, G. B. (2006). Little words that matter: Discourse markers “So” and “Oh” and the doing of other-attentiveness in social interaction. *Journal of Communication*, 56(4), 661–688. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00314.x>
- Bozbiyık, M., & Morton, T. (2024). Epistemic positioning and knowledge-building in postgraduate neuroscience classroom interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 232, 72–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2024.08.009>
- Button, G., & Casey, N. (1985). Topic nomination and topic pursuit. *Human Studies*, 8(1), 3–55. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00143022>
- Chang, W. L. M. (2025). “Being your son is rather tiring”: Assessments and assessment responses in initial interactions in Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 235, 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2024.11.001>
- Chen, J., Barnes, S., & Blythe, J. (2024). Competitive points in Mandarin-speaking multiparty interaction: Speakership and epistemics. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 225, 120–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2024.03.009>
- Clayman, S. E. (2010). Address terms in the service of other actions: The case of news interview talk. *Discourse and Communication*, 4(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481310364330>
- Clayman, S. E., & Heritage, J. (2025). Coding social interaction: Prospects, pitfalls, and procedures. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 58(3), 221–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2025.2528489>
- Comrie, B., Bickel, B., & Haspelmath, M. (2008). *The Leipzig glossing rules: Conventions for interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses*.
- de Ruiter, J. P. (2012). Introduction: Questions are what they do. In J. P. de Ruiter (Ed.), *Questions: Formal, functional and interactional perspectives* (pp. 1–7).

- Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139045414>
- Enfield, N. J. (2015). Other-initiated repair in Lao. *Open Linguistics*, 1(1), 119–144.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/opli-2014-0006>
- Enfield, N. J., Brown, P., & de Ruiter, J. P. (2012). Epistemic dimensions of polar questions : sentence-final particles in comparative perspective. In J. P. de Ruiter (Ed.), *Questions: Formal, Functional and Interactional Perspective* (pp. 193–221). Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, C., & Goodwin, M. H. (2004). Participation. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 222–244). Wiley.
- Grzech, K. (2021). Using discourse markers to negotiate epistemic stance: A view from situated language use. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 177, 208–223.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.02.003>
- Hamdani, F. (2025). *Partikel dan interaksi sosial: studi linguistik interaksional* [Particles and social interaction: a study in interactional linguistics]. Queen Pustaka Nusantara.
- Hamdani, F., & Barnes, S. (2018). Polar questions in Colloquial Indonesian: A pilot study. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 132, 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.05.002>
- Hayashi, M. (2009). Marking a “noticing of departure” in talk: Eh-prefaced turns in Japanese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(10), 2100–2129.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.12.008>
- Hepburn, A., & Bolden, G. B. (2013). The conversation analytic approach to transcription. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 56–76). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hepburn, A., & Bolden, G. B. (2017). *Transcribing for social research*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Heritage, J. (2012). Epistemics in action: Action formation and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 1–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.646684>
- Heritage, J. (2013). Turn-initial position and some of its occupants. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 57, 331–337.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.08.025>
- Heritage, J., & Raymond, C. W. (2021). Preference and polarity: Epistemic stance in question design. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 54(1), 39–59.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2020.1864155>
- Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13–31). Joohn Benjamins.
- Jørgensen, M. (2024). A question of embeddedness: On clausal and phrasal responses to specifying WH-questions in Danish talk-in-interaction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 57(3), 323–344.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2024.2369486>
- Joyce, J. B., Douglass, T., Benwell, B., Rhys, C. S., Parry, R., Simmons, R., & Kerrison, A. (2023). Should we share qualitative data? Epistemological and practical insights from conversation analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 26(6), 645–659.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2087851>
- Karaj, D-M. (2021). Indonesian discourse particles in conversations and written text. *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*, 22(2), Article 3.
<https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v22i2.909>
- Keevallik, L., Hofstetter, E., Löfgren, A., & Wiggins, S. (2025). Response cries and syntax. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 240, 91–108.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.02.012>
- Kim, S. H. (2013). Reshaping the response space with kulenikka in beginning to respond to questions in Korean conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 57, 303–317.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.04.006>
- Laakso, M., & Sorjonen, M. L. (2010). Cut-off or particle-Devices for initiating self-repair in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(4), 1151–1172.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2009.09.004>
- Lausberg, H., & Sloetjes, H. (2016). The revised NEUROGES-ELAN system: An objective and reliable interdisciplinary analysis tool for nonverbal behavior and gesture. *Behavior Research Methods*, 48(3), 973–993.
<https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-015-0622-z>
- Lerner, G. H. (2003). Selecting next speaker: The context-sensitive operation of a context-free organisation. *Language in Society*, 32(2), 177–201.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450332202X>
- Linares-Bernabéu, E. (2023). Mediating through question-asking: A sociopragmatic analysis of epistemic stance negotiation in everyday conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 213, 49–66.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.05.019>
- Mazeland, H., & Huiskes, M. (2001). Dutch ‘but’ as a sequential conjunction. In M. Selting & E. Couper-Kuhlen (Eds.), *Studies in Interactional Linguistics* (pp. 141–170). Benjamins .
<https://doi.org/10.1075/sidag.10.08maz>

- Mitchell, A., & Jordan, F. M. (2021). Kinship, seniority, and rights to know in Datooga children's everyday interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics, 181*, 49–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.04.029>
- Mitkovska, L., & Bužarovska, E. (2025). From a question word to a discourse marker: The particle *neli* in Macedonian. *Journal of Pragmatics, 250*, 116–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.10.012>
- Mutiara, R. (2025). The epistemic marking of questions in Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian. *Language Sciences, 113*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2025.101755>
- Pauletto, F., & Ursi, B. (2022). Claiming epistemic access: Eh *ciò*-prefaced turns in Trevigiano and in regional Italian. *Journal of Pragmatics, 190*, 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.01.008>
- Pomerantz, A., & Heritage, J. (2013). Preference. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The Handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 210–228). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118325001.ch11>
- Rahmanadia, H. (2022). Particle *eh* as an irony marker in the Indonesian language: A corpus-based study of the discourse of blogs. *Linguistik Indonesia, 40*(1), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.26499/li.v40i1.275>
- Raymond, C. W., Clift, R., Kendrick, K. H., & Robinson, J. D. (2024). Methods in conversation analysis. In *The Cambridge handbook of methods in conversation analysis* (pp. 3–48). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108936583.001>
- Romaniuk, T. (2013). Pursuing answers to questions in broadcast journalism. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 46*(2), 144–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2013.780339>
- Roseano, P., González, M., Borràs-Comes, J., & Prieto, P. (2016). Communicating epistemic stance: How speech and gesture patterns reflect epistemicity and evidentiality. *Discourse Processes, 53*(3), 135–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2014.969137>
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematic for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language, 50*(4), 696–735. <https://doi.org/10.2307/412243>
- Sari, F. (2008). *Pragmatic particles: A cross-linguistic discourse analysis of interaction*. The University of Alabama.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1987a). Analysing single episodes of interaction: An exercise in conversation analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 50*(2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786745>
- Schegloff, E. A. (1987b). Recycled turn beginnings: A precise repair mechanism in conversation's turn-taking organisation. In G. Button & J. R. E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and Social Organisation* (pp. 70–85). Multilingual Matters.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1997). Practices and actions: Boundary cases of other-initiated repair. *Discourse Processes, 23*(3), 499–545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638539709545001>
- Schegloff, E. A. (2013). Ten operations in self-initiated, same-turn repair. In M. Hayashi, G. Raymond, & J. Sidnell (Eds.), *Conversational repair and human understanding* (pp. 41–70). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511757464.002>
- Schubert, M. (2025). Pointing at others as an embodied connection device: Linking back to prior talk in multi-party interaction. *Discourse Processes, 62*(4), 257–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2025.2489317>
- Sidnell, J. (2012). Who knows best? Evidentiality and epistemic asymmetry in conversation. *Pragmatics and Society, 3*(2), 294–320. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ps.3.2.08sid>
- Sidnell, J. (2013). Basic conversation analytic Methods. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 77–99). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118325001.ch5>
- Steenisig, J., Jørgensen, M., Mikkelsen, N., Suomalainen, K., & Sørensen, S. S. (2023). Toward a grammar of Danish talk-in-interaction: From action formation to grammatical description. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 56*(2), 116–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2023.2205304>
- Stevanovic, M. (2023). Accountability and interactional inequality: the management of problems of interaction as a matter of cultural ideals and ideologies. *Frontiers in Sociology, 8*, 1204086. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1204086>
- Stevanovic, M., & Frick, M. (2014). Singing in interaction. *Social Semiotics, 24*(4), 495–513. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2014.929394>
- Stirling, L., Gardner, R., Mushin, I., Blythe, J., & Possemato, F. (2022). On the road again: Displaying knowledge of place in multiparty conversations in the remote Australian outback. *Journal of Pragmatics, 187*, 90–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.10.026>
- Stivers, T., & Enfield, N. J. (2010). A coding scheme for question-response sequences in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*(10),

- 2620–2626.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.04.002>
- Stivers, T., & Rossano, F. (2010). Mobilising response. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 43*(1), 3–31.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810903471258>
- Stokoe, E., Humă, B., Sikveland, R. O., & Kevoe-Feldman, H. (2020). When delayed responses are productive: Being persuaded following resistance in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics, 155*, 70–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.10.001>
- Tüma, F., Kääntä, L., & Jakonen, T. (2023). L2 grammar-for-interaction: Functions of “and”-prefaced turns in L2 students’ collaborative talk. *Modern Language Journal, 107*(4), 991–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12885>
- Wei, Y., & Wang, Y. (2025). Expressing stance: A cross-linguistic study of effective and epistemic stance marking in Chinese and English opinion reports. *Journal of Pragmatics, 240*, 18–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2025.02.009>
- Wijaya, J. (2022). Beyond mirativity and mutual understanding: The functions of turn initial and final loh in Colloquial Indonesian. *Journal of Pragmatics, 197*, 55–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.05.005>
- Wouk, F. (2001). Solidarity in Indonesian conversation: The discourse marker ya. *Journal of Pragmatics, 33*, 171–191.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00139-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00139-3)
- Yang, Y. (2023). Turn-initial na in Mandarin Chinese conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics, 216*, 144–163.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.08.009>
- Zinken, J., & Küttner, U. A. (2022). Offering an interpretation of prior talk in everyday interaction: A semantic map approach. *Discourse Processes, 59*(4), 298–325.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2022.2028088>

APPENDIX A

Transcription conventions

Based on Jefferson (2004, pp. 24-31) and Hepburn and Bolden (2013, 2017)

[and]	Brackets mark overlaps between speaker's talk and actions. A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset. A right bracket indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end.
=	Equal signs mark no break or gap.
(0.2)	Numbers in parentheses signify elapsed time by tenths of seconds.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a brief interval.
?	A question mark indicates strongly rising terminal intonation.
¿	An inverted question indicates less strongly rising terminal intonation.
,	A comma indicates slightly rising terminal intonation.
—	An underline indicates level terminal intonation.
;	A semicolon indicates slightly falling terminal intonation.
.	A period indicates strongly falling terminal intonation.
↑↓	Up and down arrows indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
AND	Upper case indicates loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
°and°	Degree signs signify the sounds are softer than the surrounding talk.
◌and◌	Subscript degrees sign indicate talk delivered voicelessly.
a:nd	A colon signifies a lengthening of a sound.
and-	A hyphen marks that the preceding sound has been cut-off abruptly.
.hh	Signifies a breath
a hah	Indicates laughter
<and>	Left/right carats indicate that talk is slower than the surrounding talk.
>and<	Right/left carats indicate that talk is faster than the surrounding talk.
(h)	Indicates plosiveness (e.g., a breath or laughter) within a word.
\$and\$	Dollar signs indicate talk delivered in a smiling voice.
()	Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to get what was said.
((touch))	Doubled parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions of events.
(and)	Words in parentheses indicate that the transcriber could only tentatively determine what was said.
->	A horizontal arrow indicates the focus of attention in the extract.

APPENDIX B

Abbreviations used in glosses

Based on The Leipzig glossing rules (Comrie et al., 2008).

1	:	First person
2	:	Second person
3	:	Third person
ADJ	:	Adjective
ADV	:	Adverb
APP	:	Applicative
CONJ	:	Conjunction
DEF	:	Definite
DET	:	Determiner
DEM	:	Demonstrative
DIST	:	Distal
EXCL	:	Exclamation
IMPF	:	Imperfective
INTJ	:	Interjection
LOC	:	Locative
NEG	:	Negator/Negation
PAS	:	Passive
PERF	:	Perfective
PL	:	Plural
POSS	:	Possessive
PROX	:	Proximal/Proximate
PRT	:	Particle
REL	:	Relative
RDP	:	Reduplication
SG	:	Singular
WH	:	WH-Questions